

## Congressman Bright Supports Funding for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON, DC – Tonight, Congressman Bright voted for the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, a bill that will fund construction at military bases and the Department of Veterans Affairs. H.R. 5822 passed by an overwhelmingly bipartisan 411-6 margin and will now head to the Senate. The bill also contains funding for specific projects at Fort Rucker, Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, and the Alabama Air National Guard.

“This is a strong bill that provides our troops and veterans with the support they have so richly earned,” Bright said. “This bill continues to make investments in the VA and provides needed funding for military installations around the country. I am also pleased to be able to secure and support historic funding for important projects in the Second District. These projects will help improve facilities and services at Fort Rucker and Maxwell-Gunter, strengthening their vital presence in the Second District. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act is the product of bipartisan work and cooperation, and I was proud to support it. I urge the Senate to act quickly to pass this legislation.”

The Bill provides \$56.8 billion in discretionary funding for the VA and \$64 billion for mandatory VA programs. Additionally, it provides \$18.7 billion for military construction and family housing, and \$1.3 billion in emergency appropriations for military construction projects in support of the war in Afghanistan. Due to legislation passed last year, this bill also allocates \$50.6 billion in advance appropriations for the VA, ensuring the VA will not be subject to budgetary delays.

Highlights of the legislation include:

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\$37.1 billion to improve access to medical services for all veterans, which was advance funded in the 2010 bill. The Veterans Health Administration estimates it will treat more than 6.1 million patients in 2011, including more than 439,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

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\$5.2 billion for mental health services to help veterans suffering from conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and traumatic brain injury.

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\$4.2 billion for homeless veterans, including \$218 million for the homeless grants and per diem program, \$51 million for supportive services for low income veterans and families, and \$151 million for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.

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\$250 million for innovative practices to improve access to care for veterans in rural areas. 41% of veterans live in rural areas.

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\$5.7 billion for VA medical facilities.

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\$590 million for medical and prosthetic research, including important research to address the needs of returning Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans.

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\$200 million in additional funding for Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve construction to address critical unfunded requirements, in recognition of the tremendous contributions made by Guard and Reserve personnel to emergency assistance, homeland security, and national defense.

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\$1.8 billion to help eliminate inadequate military housing while maintaining and improving existing units.

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\$1.3 billion to support additional military construction requirements to support operations and troop increases in Afghanistan.

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\$39.6 million for Arlington cemetery. The funding will enable Arlington Cemetery to hire needed personnel to address

deficiencies identified in recent Army Inspector General and internal reviews.

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\$71.2 million for the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

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\$23.6 million to strengthen VA acquisitions management.

Projects for the Second District included in the Military Construction/VA Appropriations Bill are listed below. A total of over \$93 million is dedicated for projects at Maxwell-Gunter, Fort Rucker, and the Alabama Air National Guard. Congressman Bright was able to secure funding for these projects through his work in the Armed Services Committee on the National Defense Authorization Act.

\$13.4 million for the ADAL Air University Library at Maxwell-Gunter AFB. Funds would go towards the construction of a 2-story addition to the Fairchild Research Information Center (AU Library). New construction will include infrastructure improvements. Alteration includes reconfiguration of reader services division, office space, bookstack areas, and upgrade of mechanical, electrical, structural, and fire protection systems. It would also renovate the Air University Press (AUP) to include customer service, editorial services, and design branches, office space, public areas, and upgrade of mechanical, electrical, and fire protection systems.

\$810,000 for Air Traffic Control Tower at Maxwell-Gunter AFB. This project would ultimately construct an eight-story, modern Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base. Funding included in the NDAA would help Maxwell-Gunter complete its design plans for the tower. The existing ATCT on the base was constructed in 1955. It is the second-oldest ATCT in the entire Air Force. Many changes have occurred at the installation over the years and the current facility no longer meets mission requirements. Additionally, the existing location of the facility does not allow visibility of aircraft ground operations at all times, due to construction of other facilities adjacent to the airfield. It was designed for now-obsolete aircraft missions and is ineffective for the current C-130H mission or future aircraft missions.

\$29 million for an Aviation Component Maintenance Shop at Fort Rucker. This project would construct an aviation component maintenance shop at Fort Rucker to house functions such as avionics testing, repair and calibration activities, electronic automated test equipment, electronics repair, spectrographic analysis, and other functions. Currently, maintenance is being performed in functionally and physically obsolete facilities. The maintenance activity is performed around the clock with only ten non-active days a year. There is no surge capability under current facility constrained operations, which compromises safety and efficiency as well as limiting mission effectiveness.

\$36 million for an Aviation Maintenance Facility at Fort Rucker. This project would construct an Aviation Maintenance Facility with supporting shop, parts storage, avionics, and other facilities. The hangar will contain maintenance bays equipped with overhead bridge cranes, fire alarm/suppression systems, Ground Service Equipment (GSE) covered parking,

and integrated mechanical support systems. This project will increase Fort Rucker's ability to meet the Army's aviation readiness requirements during a time in which our troops are serving overseas.

\$1.70 million for an Emergency Medical Services Facility at Fort Rucker. This project would construct an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) facility to house three ambulances. The project is required to provide a permanent, centrally located facility to house the Fort Rucker EMS ambulance service. The Fort Rucker EMS requires special purpose areas to properly conduct its public safety activities. There are no facilities on post which can satisfy the current mission requirements.

\$7.47 million for Fuel Cell/Corrosion Control Hangar for the Alabama Air National Guard based at the Montgomery Regional Airport. The base requires an adequately sized and properly configured facility to perform environmentally safe corrosion control on the F-16 aircraft and fuel cell maintenance in accordance with OSHA and AFOSH standards. A facility bay is required for aircraft upkeep and corrosion control. The bays must be equipped with ventilation, environmental control, and fire suppression systems. Areas for solvent cleaning, bead blasting, and painting of small aircraft parts are also required. This project will help equip the 187th Fighter Wing of the Alabama Air National Guard with facilities necessary to complete the Wing's mission.

\$4.65 million for a Training Aids Center at Fort Rucker. Funds would go towards the construction of a standard medium Training Aids Support Center (TSC). Primary facilities include the TSC, installation of intrusion detection system (IDS), building information systems and antiterrorism measures. Supporting facilities include electric service, water, sanitary sewer, and site preparation/improvements.

"Ensuring military installations in the Second District- and more importantly, the soldiers and airmen stationed there- are provided with the necessary resources is one of the most important jobs I have as a Congressman," Bright said. "The bill passed today, if signed into law, will make upgrades to key facilities at Maxwell-Gunter, Fort Rucker, and the Alabama Air National Guard and help them reach the increased requirements that have been asked of them in recent years. I look forward to working with commanders and soldiers at our fine military installations in the future to ensure their needs are met."